5.1 AESTHETICS

This section evaluates the potential for the Valle Verde Retirement Community project to result in significant changes to existing visual conditions. Aesthetic impacts of the Valle Verde project were also evaluated by the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project (Appendix A). That evaluation determined that the project's impacts resulting from the removal of 17 skyline/specimen trees would be significant but mitigable with the implementation of a proposed mitigation measure to provide replacement trees. The Initial Study also determined that other project-related impacts, including grading on slopes with a gradient of 20 to 30 percent, the development of new buildings and other on-site facilities, and project site lighting, would be less than significant and no additional mitigation measures would be required.

Concerns regarding the project's aesthetic impacts were raised during the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation public review comment period, and were focused on the potential for a project-related loss of mountain views from Torino Road and a public trail located south of and adjacent to Torino Road. Based on these comments, an Aesthetics section has been provided in the Valle Verde project EIR that focuses on potential impacts to important public scenic views from Torino Road and the adjacent trail.

5.1.1 Methodology

A variety of terms are used in this section to describe the visual conditions of the project area and to evaluate the effects of the project. Definitions of these terms are provided below.

- **Views** are comprised of anything that can be seen from a particular location.
- **Public views** are views experienced from a public place.
- **Visual resources** are typically natural features such as mountains, water bodies, and trees, but may also include features such as landscaping or buildings.
- **Viewpoint** refers to a vantage point or location from which a view is experienced.
- **View corridor** is a view almost completely framed on both sides by landscaping, development or other features.
- **Important public scenic views** are views available to the public, that are generally regarded to have scenic qualities, and that are viewed by a substantial number of citizens.

The evaluation of project-related impacts to visual conditions emphasizes changes to important public scenic views that would occur as a result of physical changes made on the project site. Important public scenic views in the project area were identified using the

following criteria. To be considered an important public scenic view, all of the following criteria must be at least partially met.

a. **Does the view/view corridor include one or more important visual resources?** As described above, important visual resources are considered to include the Santa Ynez Mountains or other major topographic features, water bodies, natural or landscaped open areas, and historic buildings.

b. **Does the view/view corridor have scenic quality?** The following factors may be considered to determine if a particular view includes visual resources considered to present a high level of scenic quality:

- Magnitude. How expressive or abundant is the view? Is the view continuous throughout several view corridors (e.g., the ridge line of the Santa Ynez Mountains)?

- Intactness. To what extent has a natural view been disturbed or compromised (e.g., hillside scarring from grading)? Are there constructed materials that impose an artificial view into the backdrop of the natural setting, such as overhead utilities, telephone poles, etc.?

- Distinctiveness. How unique or representative of the region is the view?

c. **Is the view/view corridor experienced from a heavily visited public viewpoint?** In general, the importance of a view/view corridor is heightened when it is more accessible by virtue of its location or associated with a heavily visited public area. Public viewing locations are those that have a large number of viewers and a considerable duration of view, and may include facilities such as public gathering areas (e.g., parks); major transportation corridors; or areas with extensive pedestrian/bicycle use.

Impacts to existing visual conditions and any important public scenic views that may be affected by the project will be described in terms of factors such as the degree of view obstruction, and compatibility with surrounding visual features. The extent of view obstruction may range from a determination that project-related features would be easily overlooked by an observer, to a conclusion that a substantial amount of an existing important public scenic view would be obscured. Visual compatibility is evaluated to determine if the proposed development would appear to be out of place or inconsistent when viewed in the context of existing development, open space or vegetation. To assist in the evaluation of project-related aesthetic impacts, photo-simulations have been prepared that depict the visual conditions that would exist at the project site after the proposed development has been completed. Conclusions regarding the potential for the project to result in significant impacts to important public scenic views were made by comparing project-related changes to existing visual conditions to a predetermined set of visual resource threshold criteria.

5.1.2 Setting

Project Area View Characteristics

The Valle Verde project site is located in the southwestern portion of the Hidden Valley neighborhood. Visual resources in this area include the hillsides that form the western and southern borders of the neighborhood and the project site, and vegetation along Arroyo Burro Creek. Views of the Santa Ynez Mountains are also provided from various view points located throughout the neighborhood, but due to intervening buildings and trees, views of the mountains are often isolated or seen through a narrow or moderately sized view corridor. Urban development in the vicinity of the project site consists primarily of one- and two-story single-family and duplex residential units.

Public views from viewpoints located in the vicinity of the project site are generally provided from roadways such as Calle de los Amigos and Torino Drive; from a portion of Hidden Valley Park located near the northeast corner of Calle de los Amigos and Torino Drive; and a hiking/equestrian trail located along the south side of Torino Drive. Public views of visual resources and the project site provided from these public facilities are described below. Views of the project site from private streets located on the project site, such as Senda Verde, and the private segment of Calle de los Amigos are not considered to be public views.

Calle de los Amigos. This road provides access through the Hidden Valley neighborhood and the Valle Verde facility. In the vicinity of the project site, foreground views along the west side of the roadway consist predominately of one-story development and landscaping on the Valle Verde project site. Foreground views along the east side of the roadway are dominated by vegetation associated with Arroyo Burro Creek. Cars parked along the east and west sides of Calle de los Amigos are also a dominant visual feature. North of the project site, foreground views consist mostly of one- and two-story duplex residences. Background views of the Santa Ynez Mountains that are provided from Calle de los Amigos are generally limited to narrow view corridors due to the presence of intervening trees and structures.

Figure 5.1-1 provides a typical view of the project site as seen from a viewpoint along Calle de los Amigos located south of the Valle Verde Administration Building. The portion of the project site depicted on Figure 5.1-1 would be used for the development of a new residential duplex, a triplex and a reconfigured parking lot. From this viewpoint the streetscape, and buildings and landscaping on the Valle Verde campus dominate the view. The hillside on the west side of the project site is visible in the background, but is heavily screened by intervening buildings and landscaping.

Figure 5.1-2 provides a typical view of the project site as seen from a viewpoint along Calle de los Amigos located approximately 500 feet north of the Valle Verde Administration Building. The project area shown in Figure 5.1-2 would be used for the development of three

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

View looking west from Calle de los Amigos. The structure on the left side of the photo is the existing Hospice building. The center building contains two bed and breakfast units and an independent living unit. Both of these buildings would be removed and in their place a new duplex and a new triplex building would be provided. The new buildings are depicted as units 5 and 38, and units 35, 36 and 37 on Figure 3.3-1. The structure to the right is the Administration Building, which would be expanded to be a two-story building.

Figure 5.1-1
View from the Southern Portion of Calle de los Amigos

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

View looking west from Calle de los Amigos. The buildings on the far left of the photo include a structure that contains the existing Wellness Facility and an independent living unit, and a structure that includes four studio units. These buildings would be removed and replaced by two duplex buildings depicted as units 1 and 3; and 2 and 4 on Figure 3.3-1. The structure near the center of the photo is a gazebo building that would be removed. The parking lot to the left and right of the gazebo would also be removed. A new duplex building shown as units 27 and 39 on Figure 3.3-1, and a reconfigured parking lot would be provided on this portion of the project site.

Figure 5.1-2
View from the Northern Portion of Calle de los Amigos

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

new residential duplexes and a reconfigured parking lot. From this viewpoint the streetscape, on-and off-street parked cars, and buildings and landscaping on the Valle Verde campus dominate the view. Hillside areas on the west and south sides of the project site are visible in the background, but views of the hillsides are substantially reduced by intervening buildings and landscaping.

Torino Drive. Torino Drive provides access through the Hidden Valley neighborhood and also provides access for the 11-unit Hidden Oak subdivision that is located west of the Valle Verde facility. Torino Drive terminates at the subdivision and could not be extended in the future due to surrounding topography. In the vicinity of the project site, foreground views along the north side of the roadway consist predominately of one-story development and landscaping on the Valle Verde project site. Foreground views along the south side of the roadway are dominated by vegetation associated with hillside area that forms the southern border of the project site and the Hidden Valley neighborhood. East of the project site, foreground views from the roadway consist mostly of one- and two-story single-family residences. Background views of the Santa Ynez Mountains that are provided from Torino Drive are often limited by the presence of intervening trees and structures, however, from some view points located along the roadway, extensive views of the mountains are provided.

Figure 5.1-3 provides a typical view of the project site and the adjacent area to the west (the Hidden Oaks subdivision) as seen from a viewpoint along Torino Drive. The project area shown on Figure 5.1-3 would be used for the development of five new residential duplexes, a new access driveway, and a new parking lot. From this viewpoint the streetscape, non-native grassland area, and mature native and non-native trees dominate foreground views. The existing residence on the site is also clearly visible from the roadway. The structure does not include extensive architectural detail and does not resemble the residential buildings to the west or structures on the Valle Verde campus. The most prominent background feature provided from this viewpoint is an extensive view of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Somewhat obscured views of the hillside that forms the western border of the project site are also provided.

Hiking/Pedestrian Trail. In the vicinity of Rutherford property portion of the project site the hiking/pedestrian trail is generally located 30-50 feet south of Torino Road, and is typically three to ten feet higher than the adjacent roadway. This is a neighborhood trail that ends in the Hidden Oaks subdivision. Views of the project site as viewed from the trail are generally similar to the views provided from Torino Road, although in some places foreground views of the Valle Verde property and background views of the Santa Ynez Mountains are obscured by vegetation. In other places along the trail, views of the project site and mountains are enhanced due to the additional viewpoint elevation above the roadway.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

View looking North from Torino Drive. A portion of the Hidden Oaks residential neighborhood can be seen on the far left side of the photo. The area referred to as the "Rutherford property" is shown in the center of the photo. As shown on Figure 3.3-1, this portion of the project site would be used for the development of five duplex buildings, associated parking and a new driveway. The hillside that forms the western border of the project site can be seen to the north, extending beyond the Rutherford property. On the right side of the photo, dwellings on the Valle Verde campus can be partially seen through intervening vegetation. Panoramic views of the Santa Ynez Mountains can be seen in the background.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Hidden Valley Park. This City park is located along the east side of Calle de los Amigos, and extends northward from Torino Drive to an area that is approximately 100 feet north of the northern edge of the project site. Much of the park is lower in elevation than surrounding areas, including Calle de los Amigos. This difference in elevation, along with dense vegetation located around the perimeter of much of the park, obscures views of adjacent areas and visual resources such as the Santa Ynez Mountains. Public views provided from the park are predominately from a grass area located adjacent to the northeast corner of Calle de los Amigos and Torino Drive. From this view point, foreground views are dominated by existing development and landscaping on the Valle Verde property. Background views include the hillside areas that form the southern and western borders of the Hidden Valley neighborhood and the Valle Verde project site.

Figure 5.1-4 provides a typical view of a proposed development area on the project site as seen from a viewpoint on the grass area located at the southern end of Hidden Valley Park. The project area shown on Figure 5.1-4 would be used for the development of a new residential duplex and a reconfigured parking lot. From this viewpoint the streetscape and buildings and landscaping on the Valle Verde campus dominate foreground views. The hillside on the west side of the project site can be partially seen in the background, but the hillside is mostly screened by landscape trees. The Santa Ynez Mountains are slightly visible through a narrow view corridor formed by mature trees located on and adjacent to the project site.

Visual Characteristics of the Project Site

The Valle Verde property has been developed with a variety of one-story residential facilities and accessory structures that are located throughout the project site. Much of the western portion of the project site, however, is a hillside area that is undeveloped. The Rutherford property portion of the project site is also located in the western portion of the site, and except for a single-family residence and driveway, most of this property is also open space.

The Valle Verde facility is landscaped with mostly non-native ornamental trees, shrubs, and ground cover. Mature oak and western sycamore trees are scattered throughout the campus, and are either remnants of the original oak-sycamore riparian woodland found in this area or planted as landscape trees. Outside of the proposed development area there are over 500 mature coast live oaks, mostly located on the hillside areas that form the western border of the project site.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

View Looking Northwest from the Southern End of Hidden Valley Park. A gazebo building and parking lot located in the center portion of the photo would be removed. A reconfigured parking lot and new duplex unit shown as units 23 and 24 on Figure 3.3-1 would be provided in this portion of the project site.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

5.1.3 Impact Significance Thresholds.

CEQA indicates that a project would result in a significant environmental effect when it would result in "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment." Determining when changes to existing environmental conditions are "substantial" and "adverse" for issue areas such as aesthetics and visual resources can be subjective and subject to personal preferences. To provide an objective evaluation of the proposed project's potential to impact visual resources, project-related changes to existing visual conditions were compared to a set of predetermined significance criteria. The criteria used to evaluate the proposed project are:

The proposed project would result in a significant adverse impact to an important public scenic view if it would:

A. Conflict with the applicable vista protection standards, scenic resource protection requirements, or design criteria of the City, or if it would alter or obstruct existing public viewsheds from or across the project site, including scenic features associated with designated scenic highways, by:

   A–1. Substantially degrading an important public scenic view;

   A–2. Substantially blocking an important public scenic view corridor; or

   A–3. Substantially impairing the visual context of the area.

B. Result in substantial light and/or glare that poses a hazard or substantial annoyance to adjacent land uses and sensitive receptors.

C. Result in a substantial and long-term reduction in vegetation located on the project site.

For criterion "A," potential project-related "conflicts with the applicable vista protection standards, scenic resource protection requirements, or design criteria of the City" are evaluated in EIR Section 6.0, Plans and Policies Analysis.

Potential lighting-related impacts under criterion "B" were evaluated by the Initial Study prepared for the Valle Verde project. That evaluation concluded that additional night lighting would be provided at the project site, however, the project's exterior lighting would be subject to compliance with the requirements of SBMC §22.75, the City's Outdoor Lighting and Design Ordinance. The ordinance provides that exterior lighting be shielded and directed to the site such that no undue lighting or glare would affect surrounding residents, roads, or habitat areas. Conformance with this ordinance will be confirmed by the Architectural Board of Review in their final review of the project. Project impacts related to

lighting and glare would be **less than significant.** Therefore, no additional evaluation of threshold of significance criterion "B" is required.

A significant impact would have the potential to occur under Criterion "C" if the project would remove trees or other vegetation that would result in a substantial change to the visual character of the project site.

5.1.4 Impact Evaluation

As described in Section 5.1.2, public views of the project site are provided from Calle de los Amigos, Torino Drive, a trail located adjacent to Torino Drive and from Hidden Valley Park. Prominent views of the project site provided from each of these locations were first evaluated to determine if the views meet the important public scenic view criteria described in Section 5.1.1. Changes to existing public views of the project site that would result from the implementation of the proposed project were also evaluated. Based on this analysis, it was determined if the proposed project would result in a significant impact to visual resources.

Views from Calle de los Amigos.

As depicted on Figures 5.1-1 and 2, public views of the project site as seen from Calle de los Amigos adjacent to the project site are dominated by the streetscape, structures on the Valle Verde campus, and ornamental landscaping. Views of these features are not unique to the project area. Public views of proposed project development areas provided from Calle de los Amigos do not include important visual resources such as the Santa Ynez Mountains. The hillside on the west side of the project site is partially visible, but views of this hillside area are very limited in scale. Therefore, the public views of the project site from Calle de los Amigos do not provide the features necessary to be considered an important visual resource.

Changes to existing public views of the project site as seen from view points along Calle de los Amigo would generally consist of the following project-related changes:

- Removal of two buildings that contain the Hospice facility, two bed and breakfast rooms and one independent living unit. The removed building would be replaced by a duplex and a triplex building.

- The addition of 4,600 net square feet to the Administration Building and the reconfiguration of the adjacent parking lot. With the proposed building addition, the Administration would be a 6,417 net square foot, two-story building.

- Reconfiguration of a parking lot and the removal of a gazebo building; removal of a building that provides the Wellness Facility and one independent living unit; and the removal of one building that contains four studio units.

The removed buildings would be replaced by a new parking lot and three duplex units.

Other proposed changes to the project site include a 865 net square foot expansion of the Assisted Living Facility, a 1,592 square foot expansion of Dining/Multi-Purpose Building, the development of a new Maintenance Building, and other minor alterations to existing building and structures on the project site. These proposed structural changes are generally small and would either not be visible from Calle de los Amigos or would not substantially change the existing visual conditions of the project site.

Project-related changes to existing building and structures that would be visible from Calle de los Amigos would generally result in small increase in development area when compared to existing conditions. Proposed structural changes would not result in extensive changes to the overall appearance of the project site and would not impair the visual context of the project site or surrounding area. Also, views from Calle de los Amigos are not heavily visited public viewpoints. Therefore, impacts to public views provided from Calle de los Amigos resulting from proposed structural development on the project site would be **less than significant**.

There are approximately 21 trees located adjacent to Calle de los Amigos on the project site. Most of these trees are non-native species, including silk trees, Brazilian pepper, Chinese pistache and a jacaranda tree. One of the trees adjacent to the roadway is a large (44-inch) sycamore tree. Of the trees adjacent to the roadway, nine would be removed and the remainder would be retained, although some of the retained trees may be impacted by construction activities. The trees to be removed are non-natives and are generally small silk, Chinese pistache and Brazilian pepper trees (Spiewak, 2008). Proposed mitigation measure AES-1B provided by the Initial Study prepared for the Valle Verde project (Appendix A) requires that all skyline and specimen trees that are removed or significantly impacted be replaced on-site at a minimum ratio of 1:1. Should any sycamore tree on the project site be impacted, replacement trees would be required at a 3:1 ratio. There are over 500 oak trees located on the Valle Verde property, along with numerous other non-native trees. Therefore, in relation to existing vegetation on the project site, the proposed project would not remove a substantial number of trees. With the implementation of the previously identified mitigation measure and the replacement of removed trees, the project would not result in a long-term reduction in vegetation on the project site. Therefore, the project's aesthetic impact to vegetation would be **significant but mitigable**. The mitigation measure identified by the Initial Study prepared for the Valle Verde project would reduce this impact to a less than significant level and no additional mitigation is required.

Grading required for the development of project-related features located adjacent to Calle de los Amigos would generally be for building foundation preparation, and no retaining walls would be required to facilitate proposed structures. Therefore, grading in areas adjacent to Calle de los Amigos would result in **less than significant** impacts to visual resources.

The proposed project includes a request for modifications to Zoning Ordinance requirements for street and yard setbacks, and the separation distance between buildings. None of the requested street and yard separation setback modifications would be for buildings located adjacent to Calle de los Amigos. A requested building separation modification would reduce the required 20-foot separation distance between a proposed duplex (units 5 and 38) and triplex (units 35, 36 and 37) to approximately 11 feet. This building setback separation reduction would not degrade an important public scenic view or impair the visual context of the project area in terms of building size or development density. Therefore, requested zoning modifications for structures located adjacent to Calle de los Amigos would result in **less than significant** impacts to visual resources.

Views from Torino Drive

Changes to existing public views of the project site as seen from view points along Torino Drive would generally consist of the development of five new duplex buildings on the Rutherford property. The construction of a new access drive (Calle Sastre) to provide access to the new units would also change the existing visual conditions of the project site. The potential for the proposed project to result in significant impacts to public views was evaluated for three different locations located along the roadway adjacent to the Rutherford property. These evaluation locations are considered to be representative of project site views available to the public.

Torino Drive Evaluation Location No. 1. Figure 5.1-5a provides a photo of existing project site conditions as seen from Torino Drive at a viewpoint located along the south side of the roadway at a point near the western extent of existing development on the Valle Verde campus, approximately 550 feet west of the intersection with Calle Sastre (a private street on the Valle Verde campus). Views from this location are dominated by foreground views of streetscape, open non-native grassland area, and mature native and non-native trees. The "hedge" located adjacent to the sidewalk is also a prominently visible feature. From this viewpoint, the residence on the Rutherford property is not visible. The most prominent background view is of the Santa Ynez Mountains, which can be seen through a view corridor that is generally formed by an on-site pine tree to the left and a palm tree to the right. Views of the hillside that forms the western border of the project site are partially obscured by intervening vegetation.

The view of the project site provided from Torino Drive as depicted by Figure 5.1-5a provides a view corridor towards the Santa Ynez Mountains and a view of another prominent hillside feature located on the project site. These views encompass a relatively broad area, and the view corridor of the Santa Ynez Mountains is considered to be "intact" as there are no features within the corridor that project into or through the view. This view is considered to be somewhat unique because mountain views from many public locations in the Hidden Valley neighborhood are obscured or diminished by intervening vegetation and structures. However, the views from this location are not experienced from a heavily visited public

viewpoint as there is a very limited amount of traffic and pedestrian use along this segment of Torino Drive. Torino Drive at this location primarily provides access for the 11-unit Hidden Oaks subdivision. Using a standard trip generation rate of approximately ten average daily trips per residential unit, traffic volumes along this segment of Torino Drive would be approximately 110 trips per day. For comparison purposes, there are approximately 13,000 average daily trips along the segment of Los Positas Road that is south of U.S. 101. Due to the very low traffic and pedestrian volumes, Torino Drive in this area is not a major transportation corridor and does not experience extensive pedestrian/bicycle use. Therefore, the views of the project site and across the project site that are provided from the viewpoint depicted on Figure 5.1-5a is not considered to be an important public scenic view because the three criteria used to define an important public view are not satisfied. Despite the conclusion that views from this segment of Torino Drive are not an important public scenic view, "before" and "after" photo simulations depicting the project site and the appearance of the proposed development were prepared. The results of the photo simulations are evaluated below.

Figure 5.1-5b provides a simulation of visual conditions that would exist after the completion of the proposed project and after proposed landscaping reaches maturity, approximately five years after plant installation. As shown by the simulation, foreground views would be altered by the introduction of new dwelling units and landscaping, and the eastern portion of the non-native grassland would be converted from a small open area to a developed condition. Landscaping would be placed on the western portion of the grassland area and throughout the proposed development area. The new duplex structure closest to the street (unit 6 on Figure 3.1-4), the new entrance driveway (Mesa Verde), and a continuation of the "hedge" along Torino Drive would be the most prominent visual features in foreground views. Other proposed development, such as proposed units 12 and 13 at the end of the Mesa Verde driveway would also be visible. Figure 5.1-5b also shows that that views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the on-site hillside area would not be substantially affected. After the development of the proposed project, the Santa Ynez Mountain view corridor would continue to be defined by the palm tree to the right, and would be defined on the left by the roofline of a new duplex building. The new building roofline would result in a very small reduction in views of the lower portions of the mountains, but would not encroach into any existing views of the mountain ridgeline or the upper portions of the mountains. Views of the on-site hillside would be slightly enhanced by the removal of an existing tree that presently blocks views of a portion of the hillside and that protrudes above the ridge of the hill.

In conclusion, proposed development that would be visible from the viewpoint shown in the Figure 5.1-5b photo simulation would be consistent with existing Valle Verde development and residences in the Hidden Oaks neighborhood in terms of building size, scale, and landscaping. The proposed Mesa Verde driveway would be a new visual feature, but would not be out of context with the existing urban uses to the east (Valle Verde) and west (Hidden Oaks). The conversion of foreground views of the small non-native

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Photosimulation from Torino Drive with 5-year Vegetation Growth

Panoramic Photo from Torino Drive

Source: On Design, LLC

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

grassland/open area to a developed condition would be an adverse impact, but is not considered to be significant because the grassland area is a relatively small feature and foreground views of open area located between the project site and the Hidden Oaks neighborhood would remain. Views of the on-site hillside area would not be substantially affected by the proposed project, and the hillside area would become part of a 9.8-acre oak woodland open space area that would abut the Hidden Oaks subdivision open space. Overall, impacts to visual resources as seen from the viewpoint depicted on Figures 5.1-5a and 5b would be an adverse but **less than significant** effect and no mitigation measures are required.

Torino Drive Evaluation Location No. 2. Figure 5.1-6a provides a photo of existing project site conditions as seen from Torino Drive at a viewpoint located along the south side of the roadway at a point approximately 200 feet west of the intersection with Calle Sastre. Public views from this location are dominated by foreground views of streetscape, mature native and non-native trees, and the residence on the Rutherford property. Views of structures located in the Hidden Oaks neighborhood are also provided, but the structures are extensively screened by intervening vegetation. The most prominent background view feature is a relatively narrow view corridor of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The corridor is generally formed by on-site trees to the left and a palm tree to the right. Views of the hillside that forms the western border of the project site are partially obscured by intervening vegetation. Similar to the conditions described above for view location No. 1, views from this viewpoint are not considered to be an important public scenic view due to the very low vehicle and pedestrian traffic along Torino Drive. Despite this conclusion, "before" and "after" photo simulations depicting the project site and the appearance of the proposed development were prepared.

Figure 5.1-6b provides a simulation of visual conditions that would exist after the completion of the proposed project and after proposed landscaping reaches maturity. As shown by the simulation, the Rutherford house has been removed, and the most prominent visual features in foreground views would be the roof lines of proposed dwelling units and the proposed extension of the "hedge" along Torino Drive. The proposed buildings would be located closer to Torino Drive than the existing house, however, the dark roof and building colors to be used on the proposed residences would generally be less conspicuous than the existing light colored house that currently occupies the site. Landscape vegetation would also screen views of the new residences, making them generally less visible than the existing residence. Figure 5.1-6b also shows that that views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the on-site hillside area would not be affected by the proposed development. Overall, impacts to visual resources as seen from the viewpoint depicted on Figures 5.1-6a and 6b would be a **less than significant** effect and no mitigation measures are required.

Torino Drive Evaluation Location No. 3. Figure 5.1-7a provides a photo of existing project site conditions as seen from the cul-de-sac where Torino Drive transitions from a public to a private street. Views from this location are dominated by foreground views of streetscape, the non-native grassland area, and mature native and non-native trees. From this

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Photosimulation from Torino Drive with 5-year Vegetation Growth

Panoramic Photo from Torino Drive

Source: On Design, LLC

City of Santa Barbara
Valle Verde Retirement Community Project EIR

Figure 5.1-6a and b
Torino Drive Photo Simulation – Location No. 2

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

viewpoint, the residence on the Rutherford property is partially visible. Views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the hillside area that forms the western border of the project site are not provided from this viewpoint due to the presence of intervening vegetation.

Public views from this viewpoint do not include important visual resources such as the Santa Ynez Mountains or the hillside that forms the western border of the project site. Views from this location include more expansive views of the on-site non-native grassland area, and this open area can be seen in both foreground and mid-ground views. However, views of the non-native grassland area are not intact and are somewhat compromised by the presence of the house on the Rutherford property. Similar to the conditions described above for view location No. 1, views from this viewpoint are not considered to be an important public scenic view due to the very low vehicle and pedestrian traffic along Torino Drive. Despite this conclusion, "before" and "after" photo simulations depicting the project site and the appearance of the proposed development were prepared.

Figure 5.1-7b provides a simulation of visual conditions that would exist after the completion of the proposed project and after proposed landscaping reaches maturity. Foreground views would be altered primarily by the introduction of new duplex dwelling units and landscaping, resulting in the conversion of the eastern portion of the non-native grassland to a developed condition. New landscaping would also be placed on the western portion of the grassland area and throughout the proposed development area. The new duplex structures closest to the street (units 6 and 7 on Figure 3.1-4) would be the most prominently visible structure. The new entrance driveway (Mesa Verde) and other proposed dwelling units would be substantially screened by proposed landscaping.

The proposed development that would be visible from the viewpoint shown by the Figure 5.1-7b photo simulation would be consistent with existing Valle Verde development and residences in the Hidden Oaks neighborhood in terms of building size, scale, and landscaping. The conversion of foreground views of the small non-native grassland/open area to a developed condition would be an adverse impact, but is not considered to be significant because the grassland area is a relatively small feature and foreground views of open area located between the project site and the Hidden Oaks neighborhood would remain. Overall, impacts to visual resources as seen from the viewpoint depicted on Figures 5.1-7a and 7b would be an adverse but **less than significant** effect and no mitigation measures are required.

Other Project-Related Impacts. There are nine trees located on the Rutherford property portion of the project site that are within 200 feet of Torino Drive. Due to their proximity to the street, these trees are visually prominent. Of these trees, six would be removed and the remainder would be retained. The trees to be removed include two small (seven-inch) oak trees, one moderately sized (16-inch) oak tree, two large pine trees (a 28-inch alleppo pine and a 35-inch Monterey pine), and a moderately sized (16-inch) Chinese

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Photosimulation from Torino Drive Cul-de-Sac with 5-year Vegetation Growth

Panoramic Photo from Torino Drive Cul-de-Sac

Source: On Design, LLC

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

elm (Spiewak, 2008). Oak trees to be removed would be replaced at a ratio of 10:1 on the project site, and proposed mitigation measure AES-1B provided by the Initial Study prepared for the Valle Verde project (Appendix A) requires that all skyline and specimen trees that are removed or significantly impacted be replaced on-site at a minimum ratio of 1:1. With the implementation of this previously identified mitigation measure and the replacement of removed trees, the project would not result in a long-term reduction in vegetation on the project site (significance threshold "C"). Therefore, the removal of skyline and specimen trees from the Rutherford property portion of the project site, as well as other portions of the project site, would be a **significant and mitigable** impact.

Replacement oak trees are to be planted on the 9.8-acre oak woodland area that would be dedicated as permanent open space to the City. The proposed land dedication area is located along the western perimeter of the project site, and as a result, the required mitigation trees would not substantially interfere with scenic mountain views as seen from various viewpoints along Torino Drive.

Grading required for the development of the proposed duplex building to be located on the eastern portion of the Rutherford property (units 12 and 13 on Figure 3.4-1) would require the construction of a retaining wall approximately eight feet in height. The wall would be located along the north and west sides of the new building and would be a minimum of 270 feet from Torino Road. Due to its location in relation to the duplex building, the wall would be substantially screened from view to persons traveling on Torino Drive. Therefore, grading in areas adjacent to Torino Road would result in **less than significant** impacts to visual resources.

The proposed project includes a request for modifications to Zoning Ordinance requirements for street and yard setbacks and the separation distance between buildings. The proposed modification request includes a proposed reduction of the front yard setback from Torino Drive for unit No. 6 from 35 to 20 feet. Other requested setback reductions would reduce the setback from the proposed private street (Calle Sastre), or reduce required interior side and rear yard requirements. Building separation requirements have also been requested for units 7 and 9, and 8 and 10, which would be located on the Rutherford parcel. The requested reduction in the required setback distance from Torino Drive would result in a less than significant visual impact because the proposed unit would be substantially screened from views along Torino Drive by proposed landscaping, and the single-story unit would not appear to be out of context with surrounding development. None of the requested setback reductions would degrade an important public scenic view or impair the visual context of the project area in terms of building size or development density. Therefore, requested zoning modifications for structures located in the vicinity of Torino Drive would result in **less than significant** impacts to visual resources.

Other proposed changes to the project site include a 865 net square foot expansion of the Assisted Living Facility, a 1,592 square foot expansion of Dining/Multi-Purpose Building, the development of a new Maintenance Building, and other minor alterations to

existing building and structures on the project site. These proposed structural changes are generally small and would either not be visible from Torino Drive or would not substantially change the existing visual conditions of the project site.

To minimize potential wildfire-related impacts, the proposed project would be required to conduct fuel management activities along the project site's western border to reduce the amount of flammable vegetation and provide "defensible space" around proposed structures. Proposed fuel management activities would occur in a zone that extends outward 75 feet from proposed structures and would generally consist of thinning vegetation, mowing non-native grasses, and could also result in the selective removal of certain types of highly flammable plants. The proposed fuel management activities could result in a noticeable reduction in the "density" of vegetation along the project site's western border, however, fuel management activities would not result in a substantial change in the overall visual character or context of the of the managed area, or result in a substantial reduction in the amount of vegetation on the project site. Also, the area of fuel management is not visible from an important public view point. Therefore, proposed fuel management activities would result in a **less than significant** aesthetic impact.

Views from the Hiking/Pedestrian Trail

Views of the project site as seen from the hiking/equestrian trail that is adjacent to the project site are generally similar to the views provided from nearby locations along Torino Road. Similar to the conditions described above for view location No. 1, views from the trail are not considered to be an important public scenic view due to very low use. Despite this conclusion, "before" and "after" photo simulations depicting the project site and the appearance of the proposed development were prepared. The results of the photo simulations are evaluated below.

Figure 5.1-8a provides a photo of existing project site conditions as seen from the trail at a viewpoint located approximately 550 feet west of the intersection with Calle Sastre. Views from this location are dominated by foreground views of streetscape, the non-native grassland area, and mature native and non-native trees. From this viewpoint, the residence on the Rutherford property is not visible, but obscured views of Valle Verde and Hidden Oaks residences are provided. The most prominent background feature is an expansive view corridor of the Santa Ynez Mountains, which is generally framed by an on-site pine tree to the left and a palm tree to the right. Views of the hillside that forms the western border of the project site are also provided.

Figure 5.1-8b provides a simulation of visual conditions that would exist after the completion of the proposed project and after proposed landscaping reaches maturity. As shown by the simulation, foreground views would be altered by the introduction of new dwelling units, the new access driveway, and landscaping on the project site. With this new development, the eastern portion of the non-native grassland area on the project site would be

Photosimulation from Hiking/Pedestrian Trail with 5-year Vegetation Growth

Panoramic Photo from Hiking/Pedestrian Trail

Source: On Design, LLC

City of Santa Barbara
Valle Verde Retirement Community Project EIR

Figure 5.1-8a and b
Hiking/Pedestrian Trail Photo Simulation

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

converted from a small open area to a developed condition. Figure 5.1-8b also shows that that views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the on-site hillside area would not be adversely affected, and would be somewhat enhanced by the removal of the pine tree that currently forms the western edge of the mountain view corridor. Views of the on-site hillside would not be adversely affected by the proposed project.

In conclusion, proposed development that would be visible from the viewpoint shown in the Figure 5.1-8b photo simulation would be consistent with existing Valle Verde development and residences in the Hidden Oaks neighborhood in terms of building size, scale, and landscaping. The proposed Mesa Verde driveway would be a new visual feature, but would not be out of context with the existing urban uses to the east (Valle Verde) and west (Hidden Oaks). The conversion of foreground views of the small non-native grassland/open area to a developed condition would be an adverse impact, but is not considered to be significant because views would not be from important public scenic viewpoints, the grassland area is a relatively small feature, and foreground views of open area located between the project site and the Hidden Oaks neighborhood would remain. Views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the on-site hillside area would not be adversely affected by the proposed project. Overall, impacts to visual resources as seen from the viewpoint depicted on Figures 5.1-8a and 8b would be an adverse but **less than significant** effect and no mitigation measures are required.

Views Hidden Valley Park.

As depicted by Figure 5.1-4, public views from the grass area at the southern end of Hidden Valley Park are dominated by the streetscape along Calle de los Amigos, structures on the Valle Verde campus, and ornamental landscaping. Views of these features are not unique to the project area. Public views of proposed project development areas that are provided from the grass area do not include important visual resources such as the Santa Ynez Mountains. The hillside on the west side of the project site is partially visible, but views that are provided are very limited in scale. Although public views of the proposed project development areas can be experienced by persons using Hidden Valley Park, the views do not meet the criteria used to identify an important public scenic view. Furthermore, project-related changes to existing public views of the project site as seen from this view point would generally consist of the replacement of an existing gazebo structure with a new duplex residence, and the reconfiguration of an existing parking lot. These changes to existing visual conditions are not extensive and would not impair the visual context of the project site or surrounding area. Therefore, impacts to public views provided from Hidden Valley Park resulting from proposed development on the project site would be **less than significant**.

5.1.5 Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably foreseeable development projects located in the vicinity of the Valle Verde project are identified in Section 4.3 of this EIR. In total, 14 development projects

were identified that could have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts. Of these projects, 11 are "infill" development located north of the 101 Freeway, approximately one mile or more from the Valle Verde project site in an urban setting. Due to their distance from the Valle Verde project site and their location in previously developed areas, the cumulative aesthetic impacts of development projects located north of the freeway are not considerable and result in a less than significant cumulative impact.

The three other development projects identified on Table 4.3-1 include the following:

Elings Park Phase III Improvement Plan. This project would provide new park-related facilities on Elings Park, which is a 214-acre facility located at the northeast corner of Las Positas Road and Cliff Drive, approximately one mile southeast of the Valle Verde campus. Proposed park facilities in the northern portion of the park would generally consist of new sports fields and a community center building located in an area that was formerly used as a solid waste landfill. This portion of the park site presently has a very disturbed appearance. The project also includes a proposed BMX track that would occupy an area approximately 1.5 acres in size in the southern portion of the park. The remainder of the southern portion of the park site would generally remain as open space.

Hillside House. This project site is located approximately one-half mile southeast of the Valle Verde campus and would result in the redevelopment of a 24-acre project site and the development of 120 residential units in 33 structures. The project also includes the restoration of disturbed area along Arroyo Burro Creek and the removal of non-native trees and replacing them with native trees. No development is proposed for the hillside area that border the southern and northern portions of the project site.

Veronica Meadows. This project is located approximately one-half mile southeast of the Valle Verde campus and would result in the development of 25 single-family homes on a 50.5-acre project site. Approximately 35.7 acres would be dedicated open space and 14.8 acres would be used for residential development and public open space. The project also includes the restoration of Arroyo Burro Creek on and adjacent to the project site.

The three cumulative development projects described above and the Valle Verde project would each result in new urban development or the expansion of existing development onto open space areas. The three identified cumulative development projects would incrementally contribute to impacts such as the removal of native and skyline trees and lighting impacts, however, the implementation of proposed mitigation measures, or the implementation of mitigation measures similar to those identified for the Valle Verde project, would minimize the potential for significant cumulative tree removal- and lighting-related impacts. The projects have the potential to adversely effect important public scenic views, however, each of the projects also include provisions to preserve and/or enhance opens space areas and other important visual resources, such as Arroyo Burro Creek.

The majority of the proposed development on the Valle Verde project site would be located on "infill" sites on the existing campus, and the development of the 3.5-acre Rutherford property would not substantially contribute to the loss of open space in the Hidden Valley neighborhood. In addition, proposed development on the Rutherford parcel would not result in significant impacts to mountain views or other important public scenic resources. Therefore, the Valle Verde project, when considered in conjunction with other development projects in the area, would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to aesthetic impacts and the projects cumulative aesthetic impact would be less than significant.

5.1.6 Mitigation Measures

The proposed Valle Verde project would result in a significant impact caused by the removal of, or impacts to, skyline and specimen trees located on the project site. The following mitigation measures were identified by the Initial Study prepared for the project, and the implementation of the measures would reduce the project's impacts to mature trees to a less than significant level. The project would not result in any other significant impacts to aesthetic resources or conditions, and no additional mitigation measures are required.

AES-1 Development of the Valle Verde project would result in the removal of, or significant impacts to, skyline and specimen trees located on the project site.

AES-1a Landscape Plans. Prior to issuance of grading or building permits, final landscaping plans for the development shall be submitted for review and approval by the Environmental Analyst, Creeks Division and Architecture Board of Review (ABR), and shall include the following:

1. Planting of only native species in development areas adjacent to native riparian, oak woodland, and coastal sage scrub areas. Drought tolerant, water wise landscaping shall be used throughout the site. No highly invasive non-native species listed by the California Native Plant Society are to be used onsite.

2. Replacement of all skyline and specimen trees proposed for removal or significantly impacted onsite at a minimum of a 1:1 ratio, with native species. Should any of the large sycamore trees onsite be impacted by the project, they shall be replaced at a 3:1 ratio per the specifications of the Tree Assessment and Protection Plan.